

The Cheerful Letter

EVERY PLACE A CHURCH; EVERY DAY THE LORD'S DAY; ALL EVENTS BLESSINGS; ALL JOY
THANKSGIVING; AND ALL NATURE AND LIFE FULL OF GOD.—*James Freeman Clarke.*

VOL. VII.

BOSTON, DECEMBER, 1898.

No. 7

THE CHEERFUL LETTER.

MONTHLY: 50 cents a year. Single copy, 5 cents.

Entered at the Boston, Mass., post-office as second-class mail matter, Nov. 14, 1892.

Geo. H. Ellis, Printer, 141 Franklin St., Boston.

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CHRISTMAS HYMN.

Come, sing the olden song once more!
The Christmas carol sing;
With solemn joy from shore to shore,
Let earth her tribute bring.

With guiding star and angels' song,
Heaven greets the waiting earth;
And sages come and shepherds throng
To view the wondrous birth.

There see fulfilled those prophet-dreams,
That Hebrew vision old;
From Bethlehem's stall a glory streams
That makes the future gold.

A golden future,—health and peace
To all beneath the sun;
A time when wars and wrongs shall cease,
And heaven and earth be one.

Be this our trust, through long delay
With no weak doubts defiled,
And be in all our hearts to-day
New born the Eternal Child.

—*F. H. Hedge.*

If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.—2 Cor. v. 17.

WHAT GOOD HAS THE BIRTH OF JESUS BROUGHT TO THE WORLD?

"Behold! I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people."—LUKE ii. 10.

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, according to his great mercy, hath made us to be born again into a living hope." 1 PETER i. 3.

The whole Christian world is glad to-day because of the birth of a child. In many an old ancestral hall of England it will be merry Christmas; in a thousand homes in Germany little children will look with shining eyes on the Christmas tree of the Christ child; the stately ceremonies of the Roman Church will everywhere welcome again to earth the infant born in a manger. In India and Africa, Australia and Brazil, on the fair Pacific isles, among the snow-crowned peaks of Iceland, the same joyful festival will be kept, and the same thankful song of angelic praise repeated,—*"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will to men."*

But why should the world be glad to-day? It is glad because of a hope, and apparently an unfulfilled hope.

Jesus was born to be Prince of Peace. In his days, nations were to learn war no more. But wars prevail still, not only in heathen, but in Christian lands. Every Christian nation has its standing army, its forts, its iron-clads, its terrible artillery, its awful weapons of destruction, compared with which the warlike arms of the Old World were as feeble as a child's bow and arrows.

Jesus came to save the people from their sins. Sin is still to be found everywhere, in all Christian lands. Intemperance, licentiousness, and the love of money lead men to commit acts of cruelty, fraud, dishonesty. The world is filled with selfishness and falsehood, and the misery which comes from these.

Jesus came to bring life and immortality to

light. But where thought is most free, and the human mind most active, men are still doubting or denying the reality, or even the possibility, of a hereafter. By many men of science, man is regarded as only a superior animal, and thought is considered to be a function of the brain and nerve-centres, to perish when these decay. Some modern physicists make of man a machine, the result of a million happy accidents, and are sure that the belief in a future life must finally be abandoned.

"O, star-eyed Science, hast thou wandered there,
To bring us back these tidings of despair?"

Jesus said, "Come unto me, and I will give you *rest*." "*Peace* I leave with you: my peace I give unto you." But how much unrest, discontent, and sadness of heart is still everywhere to be found!

The gospel was good news, good tidings of great joy, the promise of salvation. Perhaps you will say that, if it has not reformed the earth, at least it has promised a perfect happiness in heaven hereafter. We can bear the brief trials of time when an eternity of bliss is to follow. But the Church itself has too often changed this gospel of hope into a gospel of terror. It has taught us that man is full of sin by nature, hateful to God, justly exposed and doomed to eternal wrath and endless misery hereafter, and that this doom will overtake all who are not consciously saved by faith in the atoning sacrifice or by the sacraments of the Church. So that here, too, the hope seems to have been taken away, and a gloomy fear of divine anger substituted for it. So Christ has been wounded even in the house of his friends.

What an inexhaustible power there must be in Christianity to survive the disappointments of eighteen centuries, and to spring up anew as an ever-living hope! In spite of experience, notwithstanding all our failures, in the face of the most gloomy theology, we look to Jesus, and our faith in God and man returns. The blessing he brings us is an undying hope for the world and for ourselves. This is his great inspiration; this is reason enough why we should keep Christmas,—because the birth of this child in old Judea has planted in the hearts of men such a vast expectation of infinite good to come.

The apostle says, "We are saved by hope"; and, if you will notice it, all success, all victory, depends on the power of our hope. The half-starved inventor pursues his imaginary discovery through long years of disappointment, sustained by his hope. Vitalized by this same power, the philanthropist, the patriot, the reformer, go forward to success over apparently insurmountable obstacles. Against hope, they believe in hope. They believe they are to succeed, against all reasoning, in spite of all experience, after science has fully demonstrated that success is impossible. This is the secret of earthly progress, and it is no less the secret of heavenly progress. Christianity is no failure so long as it inspires men with hope. In that is the secret of its ultimate success.

But Christ has not only given this hope, which is the great moral motor: he has caused a steady progress toward the good which is to come out of it. The world has been making a constant movement forward from the beginning. Christ comes every day in greater power and glory than he came before. If we study all the past centuries of Christian history, we shall find none so good as this. We easily see the evils around us, but we do not see as easily what greater ones we have passed through and escaped from forever. There is more sincere piety and more genuine humanity now than there has ever been before. We feel so saddened by the sight of earthly misery and sin, because we care about it more now than men ever did before. We see it as they did not.

The time is past, and passed forever, when Christendom is in danger of being crushed beneath the vast hordes of warlike savages, by Goths and Vandals, by Alaric and Attila pouring in from the north, afterward by swarms of Mohammedans from the south and east. Those were awful days when the Arab army conquered all of Spain, and poured over the Pyrenees into France; when the fierce Ottoman took Constantinople, and swept up to the gates of Vienna. The Christian nations are now so strong that any one of the great powers of Europe would be almost a match for the whole heathen world. Were it not for the opposition of other European nations, Russia would long ago have had Constantinople

for its capital; and that would have been a blessing to mankind. England alone is able to hold India, Australia, Egypt, New Zealand. France and Holland rule over other heathen nations. It seems as if Christian Europe and America were to become masters of the whole world, and to teach the subject nations laws, manners, civilization, and a higher form of religion.

But, before this is done, these Christian nations must become more truly Christian themselves. They must enter more fully into the mind of Christ than they have ever yet done. Jesus prayed that his murderers might be forgiven. His followers have burnt alive thousands for not accepting that particular creed which seemed to them the true one. Jesus tells us that not those who say to him, Lord! Lord! shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but those who do the will of his Father which is in heaven. His followers declare, on the contrary, that no one can be saved but by professing faith in Christ. Jesus teaches that the heathen who never knew him, but who were hospitable, generous, charitable, have, though they did not know it, been helping him, and so will be welcomed into the heavenly bliss. His followers are still discussing whether possibly these same heathen may not perhaps be saved by having an opportunity hereafter to hear about Christ and to have faith in him. Before the Christian Church can convert the world, it must itself rise to a higher conception of the teaching of Jesus and the spirit of his gospel.

But there is much progress in the Church. Persecution for opinion's sake is fast coming to an end. The creeds are rapidly growing less pagan and more evangelical. The pulpits cease from their attempts to frighten men into religion, and teach the divine gospel of heavenly and human love. The irrational doctrines of the past, if not abandoned, are laid aside. Doing good and being good are now seen to be the way of salvation.

All kinds of progress are being accelerated at the present time. Civilization, invention, science, knowledge, humanity, philanthropy, advance with amazing rapidity. The Christian Church shares in this movement. I think that, when the year 2000 arrives, wars will have practically ceased; and the ingenious humanity of the world will have found some way to conquer the vices, crimes, and

miseries of the world, so that it will be seen and known that evil can be overcome by good.

And how has the life of Jesus helped us to accomplish this? Why do we trace this process back to his cradle? Why not rather say that it is the increase of knowledge, the discoveries of science, and the natural law of development that have caused and are causing this progress?

I answer that Jesus was and is the cause of the progress of mankind, because his life has inspired men with the hope which is the principle of progress. It has given to us our faith in the possibility of good. Neither philosophy, nor science, nor any visible law of development, has ever been able to inspire that immense, inexhaustible hope which came from the gospel of Jesus. Christians have lived by hope, not by sight or knowledge. And this hope is born within us, and renewed every day by faith in the great principles of which Jesus has practically been the fountain and source to the world. One of the principles is the fatherly love of God to all his children.

The result of the life, character, and teaching of Jesus, has been to bring mankind nearer to God. Men have always believed in some god or gods, but so far away, so cold, implacable, indifferent, so stern, unrelenting, terrible. They have either believed that the supreme power was an unbending law, a dark, fatal necessity, not to be moved by human prayers and tears, or else they have believed in capricious and changeable beings, who had their favorites and their enemies. They saw the bad cause succeed, and the good one defeated; righteousness begging its bread, and selfish cunning clothed in purple and fine linen. They said, "The gods are either indifferent to what we do or suffer, or they are like earthly rulers, with passions, prejudices, and partialities like our own. Offer incense, sacrifice bullocks: perhaps they will be pleased with the attention. Or else defy them, as Prometheus did: let them chain us to the rocks of Caucasus, make us roll up the stone of Sisyphus, or fasten us to the ever-revolving wheel of Ixion; but they shall not make us admit that injustice is right, or debase our souls by submission to their despotism."

Such were the popular gods of the Greeks and Romans,—gods afar off, because bound

to mankind by no tender sympathy, no sacred law of justice, no fatherly compassion, and no ever-careful providence.

Then there was the god of the philosophers,—impersonal, abstract, the supreme unknown cause or causes, the vast support of order, but still more distant, because devoid of human qualities. This supreme power was the dark necessity of things, the all of nature, the complex laws of being. In vain to pray to a law or force: it is like talking with the wind or pleading with the summer lightning.

Then came the far higher conception of the Jewish Bible, often so true, so tender, that we can find no better words to-day in which to embody our petitions than those of David, none so well adapted to express our adoring reverence as those of Isaiah. And yet to the average Jewish mind Jehovah was not so much love as he was justice, bound to punish the wicked and reward the good. And thus, as Paul argues to the Romans, as all have sinned and come short of the commands of Jehovah, therefore by the works of the law can no flesh be justified.

Imagine, then, the infinite relief which came to those who heard Jesus talking with God as a friend, close by, ever-loving, ever-helpful. "I thank thee, Father, that thou hast heard me. I know that thou hearest me always, but I say this for their sake who are standing near, that they may believe thou hast sent me." When he spoke of God, he loved to say, "My Father," "My Father and your Father, my God and your God." "Not every one that saith to me, Lord! Lord! shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of my Father who is in heaven." He taught that the angelic spirits of little children are always looking into the face of his heavenly Father. "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass." "Father, if this cup may not pass, thy will be done." "I seek not my own will, but the will of my Father who sent me." "My Father worketh, and I work." "My Father loveth me." "I and my Father are one." "My Father loveth you because you have loved me." But, that they might understand that this was no private and personal claim, he also loved to say to his disciples, "Your Father." "Be the children of your Father in heaven." "Be

perfect, as your Father in heaven." "Your Father knows what ye need." "Forgive, and your Father will forgive you." "It is not the will of your Father in heaven that one of these little ones should perish." "Be ye merciful, as your heavenly Father is merciful."

To us these words are familiar, and we do not feel how wonderful they are. We can hardly imagine how they must have moved those who first heard them. One of two things: either they seemed irreverent or else they brought God close to their souls, and made him real and divinely gracious, so that life became a different thing. Whoever saw Jesus, saw the Father; for they saw one who was in constant, friendly, happy intercourse with the Father.

We can hardly imagine it, and yet we may from our own experience partly understand it. Have there not been hours in our lives when in our necessity, in the anguish of some great sorrow, or the pressure of temptation, we have cried to God out of the depths, and then found ourselves able to speak to him and tell him all our needs, confess all our sins, and trust in his fatherly love? Something of this we all have felt; or, if to any of us this experience has not come yet, it will come, it must come. During long days and years we feel after God, if haply we may find him, not knowing that he is not far from any one of us. At last an hour comes in which we are able to cast all our care on him who careth for us. Happy moment, though born out of the deepest struggle and darkest unbelief! Sweet and strange experience, which lifts the veil from the unknown and shadowy world of heavenly realities, and brings them all so near! And yet there is nothing supernatural about it. The unnatural thing is that we should be willing to stand so far away from the divine love, and adore him at a distance with ritual and ceremony instead of walking with him, as the hymn says, "as with a brother and a friend."

Some men may have more of this sense of a divine presence and providence than others, but every one has more of it than he would have had if Jesus had not lived. The heavens are nearer to us all, the infinite love is closer to all our hearts, the peace which passes understanding is more accessible, the trust which clings to an inward

help in trial is more easy to attain since the hour when Jesus was born. His faith has filled the world; it has turned the hearts of men toward heaven; it has made God real to us, and has lifted mankind closer to the things unseen and eternal.

And the other great principle implanted in the world by Jesus is faith in man, in the brotherhood of mankind. He broke down the walls of partition between Jew and Gentile, saint and sinner, Pharisee, publican, Samaritan. He saw in every soul the divine image. To him every human being was a child of God. He rebuked the religious pride of the Pharisee by telling him that the despised publican was nearer to God than he. He told his disciples to go into all the world, and preach his gospel to every creature. By his little story of the Good Samaritan he has glorified simple human charity, and surrounded it with a halo of beauty for all time. And, notwithstanding the bigotry and narrowness of Christians, this principle has never been forgotten. It appeared in the true saints of the Catholic Church,—in the devoted soul and heavenly temper of Saint Francis of Assisi, in the humane labors of Saint Charles Borromeo, in the Jesuit missionaries among the North American Indians. It is seen in every form of modern philanthropy,—in all that is done for the insane, the blind, the deaf, and dumb; for the ignorant, the pauper, the criminal. To seek and save those who are lost,—this has always been the principle of Christian love; and never did this principle work so powerfully as to-day.

Therefore, we celebrate with joy the birth of this divine infant, because in this infant was the seed of this great future. Oh, humble beginning of far-reaching, undying influences! Oh, mysterious providence which can thus put into a child's mind and heart powers which it takes twenty centuries to develop, and which, perhaps, will not have borne all their fruit in twenty centuries more! Take heed that ye despise not any one of these little ones, for it may be the Father's good pleasure to give it the kingdom.

The church has taught, and taught truly, that the great work of Jesus was atonement, or reconciliation. He came to make mankind one,—one with God and one with each other. This was his last prayer: "That they

all may be one. I in them, and thou in me, that they may be all one in us." This, in a lower degree, has been the work of all the great souls whose life has been a blessing to earth. They extended the domain of beneficent law,—of law which brings together in order and unity tribes and states before hostile. The great inventions of our day are in the same direction. The telegraph and railroad bring the nations together. But higher than all is the influence of those select souls who have united vast races in one religious faith. So Zoroaster unified the races of Persia: so Mohammed joined the scattered Arabs in one religious commonwealth. But how much deeper and higher the faith of Jesus, who saw that by his life and death and resurrection "all men" should be drawn to him!

Let us, at this Christmas season, keep in our hearts this divine hope, that one day, by the power of Christ's love and truth, all wars shall cease, all tears be wiped away, all nations united in one great brotherhood, every knee bow, and every tongue confess the supreme glory of God the Father. Happy Christmas! which lifts us in hope above present sorrow and sin by the vision of a joyful age to come! Merry Christmas! which sends the mirth of childhood into the hearts of parents; which transfigures infancy, and teaches anew generosity and human brotherhood; which is the festival of family and home; which collects around the Christ-child and the Christmas tree the white hair of age and the curling locks of childhood. Our stern Puritan fathers objected to these festivities, because of the superstitions with which they had been associated. But we, their children, accept them again, in the purity and simplicity of their original idea.

"As the good shepherd tends his fleecy care,
Seeks freshest pasture and the purest air,
Explores the lost, the wandering sheep directs,
By day o'ersees them, and by night protects,
Gathers the tender lambs within his arms,
Feeds from his hand and in His bosom warms,
Thus shall mankind His guardian care engage,
The promised Father of the future age."

So we Thy people and sheep of Thy pasture will give Thee thanks for ever: we will shew forth Thy praise to all generations.—
Ps. lxxix. 13.

THE STILL HOUR.

CHRISTMAS MEMORIES.

O day of gladness, day of joy divine,

What part in thee have I, since all my light
Is faded into shadow? Joy is thine,

But mine is sorrow; and too dim my sight
Has grown for Christmas sunshine: give to me
But memory.

Thoughts dear of other days within my heart
Hold me apart.

I cannot bless this Christmas Day, so fast
The tears come,—all my blessing is the past.

Poor aching heart, poor tired eyes, that see

Only the empty chair, the vacant place!

Poor human longing for what cannot be,—

The voice heard silent, the beloved face!
Love knows—love knows!—but yet believe me,
dear,

You need not fear

The Christmas brightness: tears but clear the
eyes,

And, grown more wise,

The soul looks forth with added power to bless,—
The power of a deeper tenderness.

Gladness is not the mark of empty hearts,

Nor grief of full ones; neither is there strife
'Twixt Joy and Sorrow: each to each imparts

New meaning, children of one mother,—Life.

O troubled soul, unconscious of thy strength,
Behold at length,

From out the very depths of shadow, shine

This truth divine,

That of one spirit is our loss and gain,

Our deepest comfort and our deepest pain!

The empty joy is that which knows not grief;

The empty grief is that which gladness fears;
Of sorrow and of joy is born belief,

And blessed is the smile that breaks through
tears.

Then let the holly mingle with the yew,

Dear heart and true;

For unto God there is nor first nor last,—

Love knows no past.

With steadfast gaze He looks on hopes and fears,
And gathers to His feet the passing years.

—Averic Standish Francis, in the Outlook.

A CHRISTMAS PARABLE.

There was once a little boy who read in his Testament the stories about Jesus; and, as little children think everything they read is near by, he supposed that Jesus and his disciples were living near by, in the same town or the next, and he thought he

would like to go and find Jesus and ask him whether he might not stay with him awhile, and be one of his scholars. So one morning he got up early and set out on his journey before any one else was up. He left a little note on the table for his father and mother, which was this:—

Dear Papa and Mamma,—I am going to find Jesus. I wish to be one of his disciples, with Peter and James and John. I am very little, but I can do something. I can bring him water when he is thirsty, and wash his feet when he is tired with walking; and by and by I will come home and tell you all about it. CHARLEY.

So Charley set out very bright and fresh. He had an idea, as little children have, that the world is only a few miles across, and that everything is close by. So he thought he would meet some one soon who would tell him where Jesus was. But, after walking for an hour or so, he began to get tired, and wanted his breakfast. He went straight into a house and sat down. Now in this house there lived a very old man and woman, who had no children. When they saw this little curly-headed boy coming in they said, "What do you want, my son?" And he told them he wanted some bread and milk for breakfast. They gladly gave it to him; and, while he was eating it, he told them how he was going to find Jesus, and asked them if they could tell him where Jesus and his disciples were to-day. The old man and woman were astonished at this question, and said, "My dear child, we cannot." So he thanked them for his breakfast; and they gave him a piece of bread to take with him, and he went away. Then the old man and woman said to each other, "Is it not strange that this little boy should be trying to find Jesus, and we have never tried to be Christians all our lives?" So they resolved they would begin then to be Christians; and they knelt down and prayed God to make them so, and they felt very happy.

So the little boy went on, and came to where two men were sitting and disputing. One was an infidel, and did not believe in Jesus Christ at all. The other was a Christian; but he was a hard sort of a Christian, who could argue for Christ, but he did it as if he were scolding. The little boy stopped to listen, and presently went up and said, "If this man wants to know

Christ, don't wait here talking and scolding, but come help me to find him; for I am looking for him, too." Then he took them each by the hands and led them along, and they stopped arguing, curious to see where he was going; and they went along together.

Presently they came to where some one was lying on the ground, groaning with pain. Then the little boy said: "Oh, now we shall see Jesus, for he always goes where people are sick: he will come here presently. Let us sit down by this sick man, and nurse him, and make him comfortable: and Jesus will come here directly." So they sat down, and nursed the sick man, till at last he felt better, and got up and went away, thanking them. But no Jesus came, and the little boy began to be discouraged.

However, he said, "Let us go and look further; for he said, 'Seek, and ye shall find.'" But the two men said: "No, little boy, we will go no further; for we know how to find him now. We see that Jesus is not to be found by disputing, but by following him. Good-by, little boy: you have done us a great deal of good."

Then the little fellow journeyed on till he came to where a poor beggar sat on the ground, and he asked the little boy for bread. Charley took the piece he had saved in the morning, and broke it in two, and gave the beggar half, and said, "Take this and eat it in the name of Christ; and I will eat the rest." And the beggar said, "Dear little boy, this is the first time I have eaten the Lord's Supper for fifty years."

So night came on, and the little boy began to be frightened. But the beggar asked him who he was and where he lived, and he told the whole story. Then the beggar got up and went with him, and showed him the way home. And his father and mother, who had been looking for him all day, were very glad, and said, "We have sought you all day." But he said: "Why so? I have been looking for Jesus." Then he went into his little bed, and went to sleep.

And he dreamed; and, behold! Jesus came to him, and said: "My dear little boy, you have looked for me all day; and I have been near you all the time. I was with you when you went to look for me, and when you went to see the old man and woman, and the two arguers, and the sick man, and the beggar;

and you have led me to all of them. The old man and woman will now be my disciples. The two arguers have left off disputing, and have begun to do good works. The sick man blesses God for the charity of his fellow-men, and the old beggar feels that he is not alone in the world. Go on, little boy, and always do so; and I shall be with you. Though you cannot see me, you shall feel me in your heart."—*James Freeman Clarke.*

THE BOOK AND MAGAZINE CLUB.

[Send all matter for this department to Mrs. W. B. Nichols, 3 Webster Street, Allston, Mass.]

OFFERS.

Will any mother who would like to have "Gentle Measures in Training the Young," by Jacob Abbott, or any one who would like "Black Beauty," address Miss Langmaid, 2 Gordon Terrace, Brookline, Mass.?

The following books are offered by the Cambridge Branch. Address Mrs. C. W. Kettell, 19 Brewster Street, Cambridge, Mass. Old correspondents will please address the members to whom they have formerly written. In order to receive books from the Cambridge Branch, it will be necessary henceforth to send a reference with the *first* request.

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Hazen's "Spelling-book"; Monroe's "First Steps in Spelling"; "Eclectic Language Lessons"; "How to tell the Parts of Speech," "How to Parse," and "How to Write," E. A. Abbott; Morrison's "English Grammar"; "Outlines of the Art of Expression"; "Literature Primer"; Dowden's "Shakespeare"; Tweed's "Grammar"; Swinton's "Primer," "Language Lessons," and "Progressive English Grammar"; Hill's "Rhetoric"; Worcester's "Primary Dictionary"; "First Lessons in History of the United States"; Gilman's "Historical Reader, No. 2"; Hillard's "Third Reader"; Arnott's "Elements of Physics"; Avery's "Natural Philosophy"; Geikie's "Physical Geography"; Greenleaf's "Elementary Arithmetic"; Eaton's "Elements of Arithmetic"; Wheeler's "Second Lessons in Arithmetic"; Walton and Cogswell's "Problems in Arithmetic"; Franklin's "Arithmetic"; Thomp-

son's "Arithmetic"; Felter's "Primary Arithmetic"; Olney's "Elementary Geometry"; Hill's "Geometry."

Juvenile.

Henty's "Bonnie Prince Charlie"; "Sally Williams, the Mountain Girl"; "Child's Bible Story Book"; "Christmas Chimes"; "Gypsy's Cousin Joy," E. S. Phelps; "The Merry Trio"; "Happy Hours"; "The Adventures of Two Dutch Dolls and a Golliwogg."

Miscellaneous.

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The following are offered by the Jamaica Plain Branch. Address Miss Gill, Pond Street, Jamaica Plain, Mass. "Music," "The Troubles of Life," "Beauties of Nature," "On the Pleasure of Reading," "Ambition," "Art," "Wealth," "Love," and "Poetry," all by Sir John Lubbock; "The Praise of Books," by great authors from Socrates to Carlyle, and "The Modern Inquisition," by William H. Prescott. These are all in small pamphlet form.

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McClure's, 1896; *Cosmopolitan*, 1894-1896; *Harper's Round Table*, 1896-1897; *Frank Leslie's Monthly*, 1895 (incomplete); *Outlook*, 1893 (incomplete); "Lorna Doone," Blackmore; "Thelma," Corelli; "The Little Minister," Barrie; "Twice Told Tales," Hawthorne; "Robert Elsmere," Ward; "The Holy Rose," Besant; "Arabella Stuart, a Romance from English History," James; Gray's "Elegy"; "The Old Oaken Bucket."

Miss Clarke, 91 Mt. Vernon Street, Boston, Mass., offers a complete set of Juliana Ewing's story-books (9 volumes). A Sunday-school or library preferred in sending these.

REQUESTS.

[Read directions at beginning of Book Club before writing.]

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Those who send offers and requests for the Book Club will do us a kindness by noting the following suggestions: 1. Please write very clearly. 2. Do not use a pencil. 3. Do not use contractions, especially names of States (as Cal. and Col. for California, Colorado). 4. Write on one side only of the paper. 5. Do not forget to give your full address. (The State is now and then omitted.)

Will some one please send me *Harper's Bazar*, weekly, after reading? Mrs. L. A. Thomson, Elko, South Carolina.

Lucie Davis, St. Just, Virginia, would like a scholar's companion.

I would be glad to receive some journals or books on microscopy. Also anything that will assist me in classifying the minute forms of animal life found in water, mud,

etc. I have "How to use the Microscope," Phinn. (Mrs.) Charlotte De Armond, Tefft, Jasper County, Indiana.

I have been an invalid for more than eight years. I am unable to buy literature of any kind, and I should much like to receive books and magazines. I live in the bush in Algoona, Northern Ontario, where we have a long dreary winter; and any reading matter we get is much valued. I have a boy who is very desirous of getting a copy of "Robinson Crusoe." Any reading matter sent, after reading, I will pass around to our neighbors, many of whom are new settlers, who have not the means to purchase any. We live twenty miles in the bush from the nearest village. Have Sunday-school and preaching every other Sunday. I am teacher in Sunday-school, when able to go. (Mr.) S. C. Gardiner, Iron Bridge, Ontario, Canada.

Mrs. Kate Smith has moved from Pisgah, Alabama, to Dallas Mills, Alabama, and would be glad of any reading.

I want to make an historical scrap-book, and would ask *The Cheerful Letter* friends to please send me magazines and papers containing portraits of noted men and women of the Revolutionary, Civil, and Spanish American wars, also incidents or anything connected with them. My health is very poor. I have no other way of obtaining what I ask for than through *The Cheerful Letter* friends. (Miss) Kate Richeson, Allwood, Amherst County, Virginia.

Florence Criste, Madisonville, Ohio, would like Webster's dictionary, also asks for pictures for a scrap-book. Miss Criste is an invalid, and finds great comfort in books and flowers.

Mrs. C. E. Terry, Speonk, Suffolk County, New York, will be greatly pleased for something to read and amuse her four-year-old child. By so doing, it would help pass the long and dreary months of winter.

Mrs. J. Porter, Parkerville, Georgia, will again have a Christmas tree for the poor children, and asks for books and cards.

May D. Jones, North Platte, Nebraska, asks for current numbers of *Christian Register*, *Century*, or *Cosmopolitan*.

Dear Cheerful Letter,—I wish to thank the lady who is sending me *Success with Flowers*. Not knowing her address, will do so through *The Cheerful Letter*. It is such a splendid floral paper, and I enjoy reading it so much. It helps me in caring for my house plants.

I am still lending and giving away reading. I sent three books not long ago to one of the soldier boys at Manila. Everything I receive I try to "pass it on."

I would like December number of *Lippincott's Magazine* for 1873. If any one will lend it to me, I will return it. My fourteen-year-old girl would like some easy sheet music, in third or fourth grade.

Any humane literature sent to me will be placed in the public school. I wish particularly to have something about the killing of birds for millinery purposes. It is a great evil that I would like to see suppressed. Mrs. W. C. Smith, Box 156, Chase, Kansas.

Miss Minnie Thomas, Charlotte, North Carolina, a young girl, would be glad of any suitable reading.

W. E. Woodruff's address is Wake Forest, North Carolina, instead of Jonesville, North Carolina.

Mrs. O. J. Thompson, formerly of Brown's Station, Missouri, has moved to Danville, Montgomery County, Missouri.

Will the correspondents who are sending reading matter to Charles Freeman, North Platte, Nebraska, please discontinue, as there is no such person in the town.

THE MOTHERS' COUNCIL.

Contributions for this department may be sent to Mrs. J. S. Howe, Chestnut Street, Brookline, Mass.

SELECTION FROM "CHILDREN'S RIGHTS," BY
KATE DOUGLAS WIGGIN.

May we not question whether we are not frequently too exacting with children, too much given to fault-finding? Were it not that the business of play is so engrossing to them, and life so fascinating a matter on the whole,—were it not for these qualifying circumstances, we should harass many of them into dark cynicism and misanthropy

at a very early age. I marvel at the scrupulous exactness in regard to truth, the fine sense of distinction between right and wrong, which we require of an unfledged human being who would be puzzled to explain to us the difference between a "hawk and a hand-saw," who lives in the realm of the imagination, and whose view of the world is that of a great play-house furnished for his benefit. If we were one-half as punctilious and hypercritical in our judgment of ourselves, we should be found guilty in short order, and sentenced to hard labor on a vast number of counts.

There are many comparatively small faults in children which it is not wise to see at all. They are mere temporary failings, tiny drops which will evaporate if quietly left in the sunshine, but which, if opposed, will gather strength for a formidable current. If we would sometimes apply Tolstoi's doctrine of non-resistance to children, if we would overlook the small transgression and quietly supply another vent for the troublesome activity, there would be less clashing of wills and less raising of an evil spirit, which gains wonderful strength while in action.

Do we not often use an arbitrary and a threatening manner in our commands to children, when a calm, gentle request, in a tone of expectant confidence, would gain obedience far more quickly and pleasantly?

Some natures are antagonized by a shadow of a threat, even if it accompanies a reasonable order; and, if we acknowledge that the oil of courtesy is a valuable lubricator in our dealings with grown people, it seems proper to suppose that it would not be entirely useless with children. We cannot expect to get from them what we do not give ourselves, and it is idle to imagine that we can address them as we would a disobedient dog, and be answered in tones of dulcet harmony.

Again, what possible harm can there be in sometimes giving reasons for commands, when they are such as the child would appreciate? We do not desire to bring him up under martial rule; and, if he feels the wisdom of the order issued, he will be much more likely to obey it pleasantly.

Cases may frequently occur in which reasons either could not properly be given, or would be beyond the child's power of

comprehension; but, if our treatment of him has been uniformly frank and affectionate, he will cheerfully obey, believing that, as our commands have been reasonable heretofore, there is good cause to suppose they may still be so.

Educational opinion tends more and more, every day, to the absolute conviction that the natural punishment, the effect which follows the cause, is the only one which can safely be used with children.

This is the method of Nature, severe and unrelenting it may be, but calm, firm, and purely just. He who sows the wind must reap the whirlwind, and he who sows thistles may be well assured that he will never gather figs as a harvest. The feeling of continuity, of sequence, is naturally strong in the child; and, if we would lead him to appreciate that the law is as absolute in the moral as in the physical world, we shall find the ground already prepared for our purpose.

Much transgression of moral law in later years is due to the fatal hope in the evil-doer's mind that he will be able to escape the consequences of his sin. Could we make it clear from the beginning of life that there is no such escape, that the mills of the gods will grind at last, though the hopper stand empty for many a year,—could we make this an absolute conviction of the mind, I am assured that it would greatly tend to lessen crime.

And this is one of the defects of arbitrary punishment,—that it is sometimes withheld when the heart of the judge melts over the sinner, leading him to expect other possible exemptions in the future. Is it not sometimes given in anger also, when the culprit clearly sees it to be disproportionate to the crime?

Here appears the advantage of the natural punishment: it is never withheld in weak affection, it is never given in anger, it is entirely disassociated from personal feeling. No poisoned arrow of injustice remains rankling in the child's breast, no rebellious feeling that the parent has taken advantage of his superior strength to inflict the punishment: it is perceived to be absolutely fair, and, being fair, it must be, although painful, yet satisfactory to that sense of justice which is a passion of childhood.

Our American children are as precocious in will-power as they are keen-witted, and

they need a special discipline. The courage, activity, and pioneer spirit of the fathers, exercised in hewing their way through virgin forests, hunting wild beasts in mountain solitudes, opening up undeveloped lands, prospecting for metals through trackless plains, choosing their own vocations, helping to govern the country,—all these things have reacted upon the children; and they are thoroughly independent, feeling the need of caring for themselves when hardly able to toddle.

Intrust this precocious bundle of nerves and individuality to a person of weak will or feeble intelligence, and the child promptly becomes his ruler. The power of strong volition becomes caprice, he does not learn the habit of obedience; and thus valuable directive power is lost to the world.

"The lowest classes of society," says Dr. Harris, "are the lowest, not because there is any organized conspiracy to keep them down, but because they are lacking in directive power." The jails, the prisons, the reformatories, are filled with men who are there because they were weak more than because they were evil. If the right discipline in home and school had been given them, they would never have become the charge of the nation. Thus we waste force constantly—force of mind and of spirit sufficient to move mountains—because we do not insist that every child shall exercise his "inherited right," which is "that he be taught to obey."

It is a grave subject, this of will-training, the gravest perhaps that we can consider; and its deepest waters lie far below the sounding of any plummet. Some of the firmly fixed principles, however, on which it rests are as firmly fixed as the bed of the ocean, which remains changeless, though the waves continually shift above.

I. If we can but cultivate the *habit* of doing right, we enlist in our service one of the strongest of human agencies. Its momentum is so great that it may propel the child into the course of duty before he has time to discuss the question or to parley with his conscience concerning it.

II. We must remember that "force of character is cumulative, and all the foregoing days of virtue work their health into this." The task need not be begun afresh each morning. Yesterday's strokes are still

there, and to-day's efforts will make the carving deeper and bolder.

III. We may compel the body to carry out an order, the fingers to perform a task; but this is mere slavish compliance. True obedience can never be enforced: it is the fruit of the reason and the will, the free, glad offering of the spirit.

IV. Though many motives have their place in early will-training,—love of approval, deference to public opinion, the influence of beauty, hopeful occupation, respect and reverence for those in authority,—yet these are all preparatory, the preliminary exercises, which must be well practised before the soul can spread her wings into the blue.

V. There is but one true and final motive to good conduct; and that is a hunger in the soul of man for the blessing of the spirit, a ceaseless longing to be in perfect harmony with the principles of everlasting and eternal right.

AMUSEMENT COLUMN.

[Please send all material for this department to Miss E. D. Chapman, 34 Buckingham Street, Cambridge, Mass.]

GAMES FOR LITTLE CHILDREN.

One simple game for children from three years of age to eight is played by letting the child hide his head in your lap, and tapping quietly on his back say, "Mingledy, mingledy, clap, clap, clap. How many fingers do I hold up?"

You then lift any number you wish, and the child must guess how many. You answer, "Four you said, and nine it was, mingledy, mingledy, clap, clap, clap," provided these are the numbers chosen. This is kept up until the child has guessed rightly, when you blind your eyes, and *you* do the guessing.

Another game is choosing an article found in some particular kind of store,—for instance, *flour*, at a grocer's. You then say, "I apprentice my son to a grocer, and the first thing he sold me was F." The child thinks of something beginning with that letter, found in such a store, and asks if it is that. When the right article is guessed, he in turn apprentices his son.

CHARADE.

1.

My *first* is prefixed to a word with ease,
 My *second* is common to men and trees,
 My *third* doth give to all comers good cheer,
 My *fourth* forms part of every year,
 My *fifth* is dear to the farmer's eye,
 My *whole* is introductory.

E. P. P.

2.

My *first* belongs to a fish,
 My *last* is part of the same,
 To do my *whole*, a coup d'état,
 In a very popular game.

E. P. P.

ENIGMA.

1.

I am composed of 26 letters.
 My 22, 10, 24, 23, is a beautiful goddess.
 My 8, 6, 25, 17, what we are said to have
 in January.

My 15, 23, 1, is a tree.

My 11, 20, 4, 16, 9, 7, 2, is a Scotch plant.

My 24, 3, 14, 21, is what one of the planets
 wears.

My 5, 12, 26, every child should receive
 at Christmas.

My 19, 18, 13, 7, is a river.

My *whole* is a Christmas quotation.

2.

I am composed of 10 letters.

My 10, 6, 5, 3, is to look over.

My 7, 8, 1, 4, is a form.

My 2, 9, 3, 4, is a relation.

My *whole* is a winter friend of the chil-
 dren.

ANSWERS TO PUZZLES IN NOVEMBER
 NUMBER.

FAMOUS MEN IN DISGUISE.

1. Francis Bacon. 2. T. B. Macaulay.
3. John G. Saxe. 4. Alexander Hamilton.
5. William Cullen Bryant. 6. S. T. Coleridge.
7. James Russell Lowell. 8. John Milton.
9. N. P. Willis. 10. John Howard Payne.
11. Charles Kingsley. 12. George Wash-
 ington. 13. Thomas Hood. 14. Michael
 Angelo.

CHARADE.

1. Skin. 2. Blockhead.

DECAPITATIONS.

1. Strain, train, rain, ain.
2. Clover, lover, over.

IMPORTANT NOTICES.

There will be a meeting of the Cheerful Letter Exchange at 25 Beacon Street, Boston, on Friday, January 6, at 10.30 A.M. All interested in the work are cordially invited to be present.

The editor asks contributions to the "Mothers' Council." If those interested in the subjects considered in this department would write short articles on the topics suggested by what is printed each month, it would add very much to the interest and usefulness of the paper. We will propose, as a good question for discussion, the paragraph in our article of this month: "Educational opinion tends more and more every day to the absolute conviction that the natural punishment, the effect which follows the cause, is the only one which can safely be used with children."

Is this philosophy sound? We should be glad to receive articles on both sides of this question, especially where the arguments are based on personal experience.

Mrs. May D. Jones, North Platte, Nebraska, has been supplied with current numbers of the *Christian Register*.

The editor would be glad to receive from any one who does not need them for files, the following numbers of *The Cheerful Letter*: September, 1897; November, 1896; April, 1894; November, 1894; March, 1893; August, 1893.

DIRECTIONS.

EDITOR.—Miss L. Freeman Clarke, 91 Mt. Vernon Street, Boston, Mass.

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SECRETARY OF BOOK CLUB OF CHEERFUL LETTER EXCHANGE.—Mrs. W. B. Nichols, 3 Webster Street, Allston, Mass.

TREASURER OF CHEERFUL LETTER EXCHANGE.—Miss Louise Howe, 53 Linden Street, Brookline, Mass., or 25 Beacon Street, Boston, Mass.

Subscriptions and renewals should be sent to the treasurer, also all changes of address and requests for discontinuance. The subscription is fifty cents a year. If subscribers do not receive the paper regularly, they are requested to notify Miss Howe at once.

Those not able to subscribe for the paper, but desiring to receive it, may do so by writing to Miss Louise Howe, as above. Please give full name and address. Also send name of minister as reference. Some of our members take the paper in order to send it to those who are not able to subscribe for it.